The Maharshi

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Śivabhaktavilāsam

Upamanyu's Śivabhaktavilāsam *is one of the ancient Sanskrit texts that the Maharshi often quoted or referred to when describing the lives of the sixty-three Nayanar saints. It is well known how the reading of the* Periapuranam*, the Tamil rendering of these stories, awoke within the heart of the boy Venkataraman the sleeping giant of spiritual awareness. This culminated in his permanent realization of the Self in 1896. The stories of Śiva bhaktas, narrated in greater detail in the* Śivabhaktavilāsam*, remained a storehouse of inspiration from which the Sage of Aruṇāchala readily gathered nourishment to appease the spiritual hunger of his devotees.*

Abraham of the Old Testament was told by God to sacrifice his only son, in the same manner that a sacrificial lamb would have been offered. Following the Lord's command, Abraham bound the boy, placed him on a heap of firewood and raised his arm to plunge a dagger into his chest when an angel of the Most High stopped him. In the case of Dabhra, this same command from God was taken a step further; yet Dabhra didn't flinch.

The following story is from the new English translation of the Śivabhaktavilāsam *that will soon be published by Śrī Ramanasramam.*

narapaśūnimān ahami tāḍayan |
paraśivaudanaṁ vitanuṣe pacan || 32 ||

For, Thou dost cut off the egos of human beings steeped in ignorance, season them and make them over to Śiva for food. *–Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana, by Ganapati Muni*

The Story of Dabhra

Śrī Agastya:

Once in Kailāśa, Pārvati curiously enquired of Lord Parameśvara, who was resting with His head placed in her lap: "Lord! Tell me, if you please, who is your favorite among Nandi, Bhṛngi and Chandi." Pasupati, the Lord of beings, combing through her locks with His fingers, replied: "More than anyone else, including you, Dabhra Bhakta pleases me the most. I must say, I cannot bless him enough." Shocked at this revelation, Uma demanded an explanation. Śiva got up, smeared His body with ashes, tied his matted locks into the familiar *kaparda* and said, "Follow me and see for yourself." He proceeded to Aruṇāranyam.

Meanwhile, in his own town, Dabhra was preparing to feed Maheśvaras (devotees of Śiva), as it was the auspicious day of Bharani in the month of Chaitra. As no devotees approached him for food, he went out to find them. At this instance, Śiva appeared as a *Bhairava* (staunch Śiva *bhakta*) at his house and cried aloud, "Is it Dabhra's house? Can I get some food here?" Chandana, the maid servant came out and reverentially replied: "Please come in. The master of the house will be here soon." The response was: "We do not enter a house when the master is away. I shall take leave." At this, Svetavananayika, the wife of Dabhra Bhakta, rushed to the door and pleaded with him to stay. Repeating the same words as before, he added: "We shall rest in the Ganapatiśvara Temple."

Shortly after, Dabhra returned despondent at not finding any Maheśvaras to feed. His wife narrated to him what had happened in his absence and asked him to bring the devotee, who shone like Śiva, from the nearby temple. Hearing these words, which were like nectar, Dabhra sped to the temple and found the

Bhairava seated in *vīrāsana* beneath the *kovidara* (fig) tree. His left elbow was supported by *yoga danda*, the *yogi's* staff. *Brahma kapala*, the skull which served as the begging bowl, was by his right hand, which was engaged in counting the sacred beads. A small pouch full of the sacred ashes, wreathed by a chain of *rudrākṣās*, lay before him. His effulgence outshone the sunlight itself. The great yogi looked aged, rugged, and somewhat tired.

Dabhra fell at his feet and clasped them tightly. The *Bhairava,* with a considerate glance, inquired, "Who is it?" Charmed by the enquiry, Dabhra replied, "Though I consider myself a slave of the devotees, people call me Dabhra Bhakta. I take refuge in you. Bless my home with the dust of your feet and partake of the food we serve." The *Bhairava* rejoined, "Your fame is spreading to regions afar. You are a symbol of the adage 'charity begins at home'. Today is Chaitra Bharani, a day as auspicious as Mother Girija herself. What a great fortune is it to be served dinner by a true devotee! Nevertheless, I need to caution you about a certain matter that might sound unpleasant. Well, let me not cause distress to your household. I shall approach another." So saying, he rose to leave.

Dabhra's Dialogue with the Bhairava

Śrī Agastya:

As the *Bhairava* stood up, Dabhra held fast to his feet, and trying to stop him pleaded, "Have no doubt my lord. Try me! By your grace I shall be able to meet your requirements." The Lord interrupted saying, "Wait, wait, I do not eat the regular items like milk, curds, ghee, rice, vegetables, etc. Even fruits plucked from the celestial Kalpa tree do not suit me. Now listen to my food habits. I eat only once in six months — and that is flesh! Surely it is beyond your scope."

Dabhra quickly replied, "We have young animals at home. Tell me your choice."

The *Bhairava* paused awhile and said, "Well, what I consume is human flesh — that of a five- or six-year-old boy, the only child of his parents, faultless and perfect in body and in all respects. While the mother holds him fast in her lap, the father should chop him to pieces, both without the least sorrow in heart. After the father washes the meat free of hair, nails and bones, the mother should mince and cook it happily, using spices and condiments. Such food I relish and nothing else. Now, hasten to your wife and obtain her wholehearted approval."

The Liberation of Dabhra

Dabhra, relieved to hear the consent of the guest, rushed to his house. He calmly approached his anxiously-waiting wife, and placing his arm around her, explained at length the codes and subtleties of Śaiva Dharma — the practice of service to devotees. Somewhat perplexed at the unsolicited explanation, she remarked to him, "Lord! What is all this preamble for? Do not my actions reflect your mind? Do not make me feel ashamed. Speak out what is on your mind." At this Dabhra pulled himself together and narrated the *Bhairava's* requirements. Sveta closed her eyes in contemplation of the Lord and replied, "If that is the Lord's will, go and bring our darling son whose life we shall consecrate to the Lord himself."

Dabhra sped like the wind to the *gurukula* school where the boy Śrīpati was presently meditating on the Panchākṣari. At the arrival of his father, Śrīpati was prompted by his Guru to recite a hymn on Umāpati. Its import was, "Śiva alone is worthy of worship. Śivabhaktās are worthy of service ever." Immensely pleased with his rendering, overflowing with feeling, the Guru blessed him with long life and prosperity. Dabhra, obtaining permission from the Guru, brought the boy home and handed him over to his mother.

Sveta bathed the boy in perfumed lukewarm water, dried him with a towel and, holding him in her lap, beckoned to her husband. Dabhra brought with him a sharp knife and cautioned his wife, "Do not let your heart give in to pity, lest this offering should be soiled." He watched the boy for the last time, shining with fresh stripes of the sacred ashes. Unperturbed, he chopped asunder the boy at his neck in one stroke. Śiva! Śiva! The boy's head flung

to a distance from the mother's lap. Wasting no time, the blood was collected into a vessel, the trunk cut into pieces and the edible parts carefully removed and washed. Dabhra handed the minced meat to his wife, who dressed it with select spices such as cloves, pepper, coriander, cardamom, fenugreek, white mustard, asafoetida, and cooked it in fresh butter. As the head portion was unsuitable for cooking, it was laid aside, which was preserved by the handmaid Chandana. Then, Sveta informed her husband that food was ready and the *Bhairava* should be brought without delay.

Dabhra ran again to the temple and informed the *Bhairava* who was sitting in contemplation in the same spot. At this, the *Bhairava* rose majestically in his awe-inspiring grandeur. Enthusiastically drawing handfuls of ashes from the pouch, he smeared them all over himself. He held the *kapālam*, the skull bowl, in one hand and with the other played his *damaru* (hand-held drum) which echoed terrifically throughout the land. He had a waistband of skulls that rubbed against one another when moving. His thick silver tresses were tightly tied into a crown of *jatamukutam*, held fast by a garland of smaller skulls. His forehead, smeared with red *gorochana,* seemed like the fiery third eye, while his two eyes spread terror as well as compassion. As he walked with the support of Dabhra, his oversized anklets tinkled manifesting the primeval *nada* — cosmic vibration.

Once they reached his house, Dabhra made the old *Bhairava* sit and washed his feet in a golden plate and accorded him ceremonial worship. Later, placing two broad banana leaves before him, the lady of the house, Sveta, served the cooked meat in a separate bowl, and rice on the leaves. When she sprinkled the ghee on the rice in the traditional manner, Dabhra handed him a vessel of fragrant, sweetened water. The *Bhairava* examined the contents on the leaf plate and remarked, "I can see that you have omitted cooking the head." While the couple looked at each other anxiously, the maid Chandana appeared there with a bowl and said, "Expecting this, I cooked the head portion separately." Feeling greatly relieved, the couple requested the extraordinary guest, "Revered one, what is sought by you is served to you. Eat to your heart's content." Then the *Bhairava* rejoined, "Do not rush me. I never eat without company." At this Dabhra went out for a second guest and returned without finding one. When the *Bhairava* suggested that Dabhra himself could accompany him, he replied, "It is a practice for me to wait on the guest while serving him." On being pressed further, he sat beside the guest.

As they were about to start, the elderly guest remarked, "Normally the parents feed their children first, and even take delight to sacrifice their own meal for their sake. Now fetch your son at once and let him eat with us." In reply to these agonizing words, Dabhra said, "He is not available any more, so kindly proceed with the fare before the food turns cold." Nevertheless, the *Bhairava* ordered him to call his son by name. Dabhra, still remaining calm, bade his wife to do so. Then Sveta, controlling herself from choking with emotion, went out and shouted: "Śrīpati, my darling son! Come at once, will you?" Lo, this call wrought a miracle! As if appearing from nowhere, Śrīpati tottered towards her and threw himself in her arms. She could not believe her eyes. Could this boy be someone else? She kissed him. His body smelled like all those spices she had dressed him with! She stopped to reason, but then left her mind bare in gratitude to the Lord of inscrutable ways. The boy asked her innocently, "Mother! Where did I go from your lap?" She pressed him to her heart and replied, "Nowhere dear!"

To find out the cause for the delay, Dabhra came out and was dumbstruck at the sight. He shared the embrace of his son with his wife. When they went inside, they saw no trace of the *Bhairava* or the food items. Then the Lord appeared there with all His paraphernalia. Celestials rained sweet-scented flowers and the quarters resounded with the resonating sounds of their instruments.

The blessed family praised the Lord in unison. The all-compassionate Parameśvara blessed them with *sārūpya mukti*. He also blessed their kith and kin, and the maid servant too.

Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana

by Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni
Translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma

The great devotion of the seer-poet Ganapati Muni to his guru Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is well known. Bhagavan reciprocated the Muni's veneration by continuously shedding his grace on him and leading him to Self-abidance. The story of the genesis of Ganapati's "Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana" (þrŸ ramaõa-catv˜riÕþat) has been wonderfully discribed by Sri K. Natesan in the Mountain Path (*Jayanti Issue*, 2000).

"Forty Verses," which is daily recited before the Maharshi's tomb, is a heartfelt outpouring of devotion from a disciple of the highest order, to his guru, Sri Ramana. It is hoped that this word-by-word translation will enable devotees to gain a deeper insight into the Divine manifestion of the Maharshi as proclaimed by a unique seer of the 20th Century.

vande þrŸ ramaõarÿer ˜c˜ryasya pad˜bjam|
yo me'darþayadŸþaÕ bh˜ntaÕ dv˜ntamatŸtya||

vande - I bow, *þrŸ ramaõarÿe×* - of Rishi Sri Ramana , *˜c˜rasya* - of the spiritual teacher, *pad˜bjam* - lotus feet, *ya×* - who, *me* - me, *adarþayad* - showed, *ŸþaÕ* - Lord, *bh˜ntaÕ* - shining, *dhv˜ntam* - darkness, *atŸtya* - transcending

I bow to the lotus feet of the spiritual teacher, Rishi Sri Ramana, who showed me the Lord, shining, transcending darkness.

kathay˜ nijay˜ kaluÿaÕ harat˜
karuõ˜ nidhin˜'runaþaila juÿ˜|
khaga v˜hana bh˜ÿita tattva vid˜
v®ÿa v˜hana mauna rahasya bh®t˜||1||

kathay˜ - story, *nijay˜* - own, *kaluÿam* - impurity, *harat˜* - removes, *karuõ˜* - compassion, *nidhin˜* - ocean, *aruõa* - red, *þaila* - mountain, *juþ˜* - takes delight in, resorts to, *khaga* - bird, *v˜haha* - mount, *bh˜ÿita* - spoken, *tatva* - truth, *vid˜* - knowing, *v®ÿa* - bull, *v˜hana* - mount, *mauna* - silence, *rahasya* - mystery, *bh®t˜* - bearing, carrying

The story of his own life removes impurities. He is an ocean of compassion, taking delight in the red mountain (Arunachala).

He knows the truth spoken by the bird-borne Vishnu, and bears the mystery of the silence of the bull-borne Siva.

gaõar˜õmukha s¨risabh˜guruõ˜
guõasañcaya ratnamahodadhin˜|
ghanag¨ýhasahasra kareõa yath˜
tanukañcuka guptamah˜mahas˜||2||

gaõar˜õ - Ganapati, *mukha* - beginning with, *s¨ri* - learned men, *sabh˜* - assembly, *guruõ˜* - guru, *guõa* - virtues, *sañcaya* - heap, *ratna* - wealth, *mahodadhin˜* - great repository, *ghana* - cloud, *guýha* - concealed, *sahasra* - one thousand, *kareõa* - ray (of light), *yath˜* - as, *tanu* - body, *kañcuka* - garb, *gupta* - hidden, *mah˜mahas˜* - true greatness

He is the guru of an assembly of learned men, beginning with Ganapati. He is a great repository of a wealth of virtues.

Just as the thousand-rayed one (the sun) is hidden by a cloud, his true greatness is hidden by the garb of the body.

catureõa calendriyanigrahaõe
pa÷un˜ parakŸyaguõagrahaõe|
chalavarjita maunasam˜dhijuÿ˜
balatarjita bhŸkarak˜maruÿ˜||3||

catureõa - ingenious, *calendriya* - roving senses, *nigrahaõe* - in defeating, *pa÷un˜* - skillful, *para* - others, *kŸya* - belonging to, *guna* - virtues, *grahaõe* - in mentioning with praise, *chala* - deceit, *varjita* - without, *mauna* - silence, *sam˜dhi* - peace, *juÿ˜* - delighting in, *bala* - strong, *tarjita* - reviled, *bhŸkara* - fear-causing, *k˜ma* - desires, *ruÿ˜* - slayer

Ingenious at defeating the roving senses, he is skillful in praising the merits of others.

He delights in the peace of silence which is without deceit, and is the the slayer of the strong, reviled, frightening passions.

52nd Mahasamadhi Anniversary in New York

The Maharshi's 52nd *Aradhana* was observed by Arunachala Ashrama in the Community Hall of the Ganesha Temple in Queens, New York City, on Sunday, April 14th, 2002. It was well attended by devotees, mostly from the tri-state region.

The program began with the recital of the "Marital Garland of Letters." By serendipity, this recitation coincided exactly with the date (April 14) and time (8:47 P.M., IST) that the Maharshi breathed his last fifty-two years ago. All were thrilled to know this. Also, the devotees at Sri Ramanasramam were reciting the same composition at that very same time, tying us all together in the garland of Bhagavan's Presence.

Dennis Hartel welcomed the devotees and provided a short biographical account of our guest speaker and friend, Dr. Eric Ford. Eric is about to move to the West Coast, and since he is the only Astrophysicist we know, we thought that we should extract at least one lecture from him before his departure. The subject? Something simple: contemporary theories of creation; the Vedic ideas on creation; and the Maharshi on creation. With his thorough understanding of the subject, he was able to sum up this enormous topic in just thirty minutes. Quite a feat, indeed. In jest he titled the talk, "From the Big Bang to Bhagavan". It was enjoyed by all.

We had many highly-qualified singers at the function. Regretfully, due to a lack of time, only a few were able offer their songs. "Upadesa Saram" and "Arunachala Pancharatnam" were recited by all the devotees. The Vedas were chanted and *arati* was offered, followed by *prasad*, consisting of a well-prepared and tasty meal.

Sri Ramana's Children's Ashrama In Nova Scotia

The Children's Ashrama at the Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama will run from

August 19th through August 23rd

(Monday through Friday)

Those who wish to have their children attend, or wish to attend with their children, should call for more information.

Darlene: 902-665-2263

or

New York Ashrama: 718-575-3215

Letters and Comments

Mindfulness

I wonder if you could help me with a question I have been troubled with lately. I don't recall Bhagavan addressing this. My dilemma is this: How much attention to devote to my present experience, whether good or bad, being 'mindful' if you will. And when to turn from this experience and inquire 'To whom does this occur?' When done too early this technique can seem to reject being present in the world. I hope I have made myself clear. Any answer you could give would be appreciated.

Being mindful, being aware in the present, as you have mentioned, is useful for developing detachment. Detachment frees the mind and allows it to sink within, or to dissolve. When to turn from this practice to enquiry depends on the pakva *(fitness) of the* sadhaka*. The* Vichara *technique does not reject "being present in the world," but rather provides a means to realize that you are present 'as' the world. Nothing will be separate. In short, being 'mindful' during your activities is good, but one should, with one-pointed mind, spend some time daily seeking the source of the mind. As this practice deepens, one will discover there is no such thing as 'mind', only the Self.*

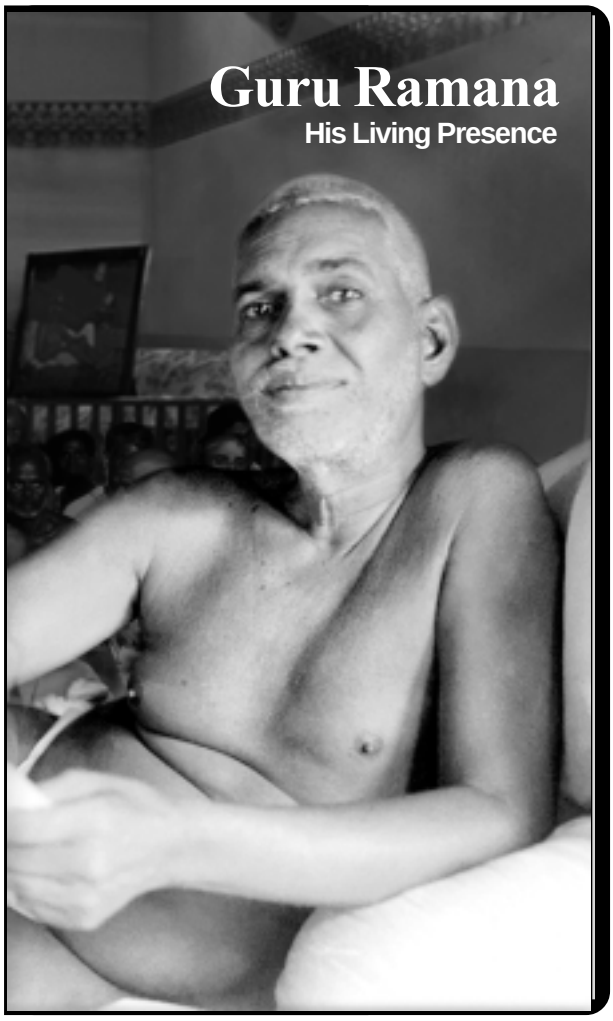
Editor

Why Creation?

I have a burning question which won't leave me alone. After studying and doing some meditation for several years, I can't shake this. Why was all this creation in the FIRST place. It can't be because we need to become conscious of our true Self. Our Self already is conscious, was conscious and will always be conscious. In all the Maharshi's readings, he always ignores this type of question and says, "Just go inside and ask who it is that is asking the question." I have done this very thing for many months and the question subsides but doesn't leave me alone. I turned to the writings of Sri Aurobindo which helped to look at it from a total evolutionary process; but it still seems silly, at best, and vague as to 'why a creation?'– if this world we live in is an illusion anyway. Any help or suggestions for reading materials would be a blessing to me. Thank you for your indulgence.

"Why the creation in the first place?" That is a good question for the mind. But are we the mind? We, the created substance, are in an unfortunate position to try and understand what was on the Creator's mind when producing all of this, if there is such a thing as 'mind' at all for the Creator. No intellectual answer to this question can be correct, for the truth lies beyond the realm of the created – us, the individuals. So what to do? Either forget about the whole matter and go on with your normal life, or seek the solution to this question by trying to understand what it is that has been created–"me". "Me" or "I" is perfectly apparent to all, but what is not apparent is what this "I" is, where did it came from, where does it go, and what is its true nature. This investigation is worth pursuing, because the Maharshi and other sages from time immemorial have declared that the answer to this question resolves all other questions. Once we know our Self – not intellectually, but by direct experience – then this nagging question about the purpose of creation is put to rest. *Editor*

THE MAHARSHI is a free bimonthly newsletter edited by Dennis Hartel and Dr. Anil Sharma and distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. The newsletter is also delivered attached to an e-mail as a PDF. Send your request to "ashrama@aol.com". This issue and all back issues are available at "http//www.arunachala.org". Books, videos and audio CDs on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found on this Web site.



GURU RAMANA – His Living Presence

(color, music, 75 minutes: price: $25.00)
Available in DVD or VHS

M. S. Subbulakshmi's inspiring renditions of the Ma harshi's compositions provide an impeccable backdrop to the personal stories and narrations delicately strung together with English *subtitles, voiceovers, archival photos*, and *films*.

Though thousands flocked to Sri Ramana Maharshi from the world over, few moved with him more intimately than those featured in this video.They received his grace, absorbed his effulgence and spent a lifetime experiencing ***His Living Presence.***

Introduced by Swami Ramanananda Saraswati (former President of Sri Ramanasramam). *Guru Ramana – His Living Presence* features highlights of interviews with Annamalai Swami (1906-1995), Balarama Reddy (1908-1995), Kanakammal (1922-), Krishnaswami (1906-1996), Kunjuswami (1897-1992), N. N. Rajan (1906-1994), Prof. N. R. Krishnamoorty Aiyar (1907-1994), Rajapalayam Ramani Ammal (1927-1994), Ramaswami Pillai (1895-1995), Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994) and Sampoorna Ammal (1899-1993).

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation have been going on in a few places near large cities. Some of them are weekly, others monthly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please call or write for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 /dklegon@rcn.com)

Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (706-846-5620 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-502-4892 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)

Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / Arunahill@aol.com)

San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-324-1160 / Nachiketas@hotmail.com)

Toronto, Canada — Krishen & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)